

Report

Cabrillo National Monument

■ 1.0 Site Description

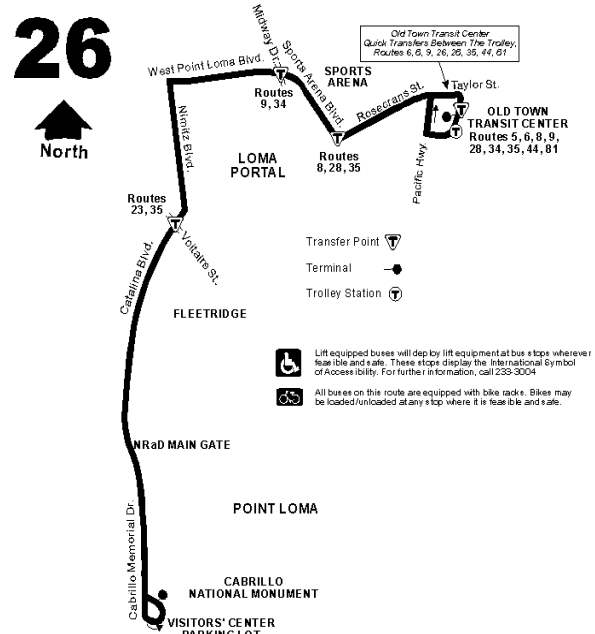
The Cabrillo National Monument (the Monument) was established in 1913 to commemorate the first time Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo landed at the San Diego Bay. Cabrillo was the first European to set foot on the West Coast of what later became the United States. The Monument is located at the southern tip of Point Loma, approximately 10 miles from the city of San Diego. Transportation access to the Monument is via I-5, or I-8 to SR 209. The entrance gate to the Monument is located at the southern terminus of Cabrillo Memorial Drive (see Figure 1). Figure 2 shows the current San Diego Transit Corporation (SDTC) bus route used to access the Monument. The Monument consists of 144 acres with the following main attractions:



- **The Visitor Center** – The Visitor Center is located beyond the junction of Cabrillo Road and Cabrillo Memorial Drive. There is a 350-vehicle parking lot with space for six buses located adjacent to the visitor complex. The complex includes a 150-seat amphitheater and a bookstore that is operated by the Cabrillo National Monument Foundation. Here visitors can find information about the Monument, exhibits, films, and panoramic views of the harbor.
- **The Cabrillo Statue** – The commemorative statue of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, the leader of the first European expedition to explore the Pacific Coast, is located near the Visitor Center.
- **The Old Point Loma Lighthouse** – As the main attraction of the Monument, the old lighthouse sits 422 feet above sea level. It is here that visitors enjoy the coastal view and get a glimpse of the refurbished 1880s interior of the lighthouse.
- **Whale Overlook** – Between December and March this is a popular whale-watching spot where visitors come to watch the Pacific Gray Whale migration. The whale overlook also has several remains of WWII coastal defense bunkers.

- **Cabrillo Tidepools** – The Tidepool area is at the southern end of Gatchell Road. It allows visitors the opportunity to view marine plants and animals during winter low tide periods.
- **Bayside Trail** – This is a two-mile trail that descends approximately 300 feet through native sage scrubs on the eastern side of Point Loma. Along the way, visitors can enjoy a view of old coastal defense searchlight bunkers.

Figure 1. Map of Cabrillo National Monument Figure 2. Map of SDTC Rt. 26 Bus Service



The Monument is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. in non-summer months and open until 6:15 p.m. during the summer. A \$5.00 entrance fee per vehicle or \$2.00 per cyclist or walk-in is collected at the entrance gate. In 1998, the Monument collected a total of \$720,000 from entrance fees. Of that amount 80 percent went back to the Monument for maintenance and project funding. According to the park superintendent, most visitors come to the Monument to enjoy the scenic view.

Park visitation has been fairly level throughout the past several years. In 1998, approximately 1.2 million people visited the Monument. In the past 10 years, visitation has averaged between 1.1 and 1.2 million. Peak visitation occurs between December and January, corresponding to the gray whale migration season, and between July and August, corresponding to summer vacations. Weekends are typically more crowded than weekdays. The average time a visitor spends in the Monument is one to three hours.

Existing transportation facilities include an entrance station beyond the junction of Cabrillo Memorial Drive and Cabrillo Road, a 350-space parking lot near the Visitor Center, as well as three smaller parking lots near the tidepool area with a total of 50 to 60 spaces. Except for special events such as the Cabrillo Festival at the end of October and events during the whale-watching season, parking has not been a problem.

One concern, however, is the location of the entrance station. Currently, the entrance station location allows visitors to enter the Monument (via Cabrillo Road) and visit the tidepool area without paying the entrance fee. This raises equity questions regarding the use of the Monument and may inadvertently encourage overuse of the tidepool area. The staff is also concerned about the potential for queuing at the entrance station that would block traffic accessing Cabrillo Road. As a result of these concerns the Monument recently completed a traffic analysis of the entrance area and subsequently plans to relocate the entrance station north of the Cabrillo Memorial Drive and Cabrillo Road junction. The Monument also has plans to expand the Whale Overlook area to accommodate greater capacity during whale-watching season.

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

There are no existing ATSs on-site. However, the San Diego Transit Corporation (SDTC) operates a bus route (Route 26) that provides service at 30-minute headways from the Old Town Transit Center near downtown San Diego to the Visitor Center. The last bus leaves the Old Town Transit Center at 4:46 p.m. during the weekday and leaves at 4:16 p.m. on weekends. Service to the Monument begins at 5:46 a.m. during the weekday and at 8:16 a.m. during the weekend. The total round-trip time is approximately one hour. According to the park superintendent approximately 620 to 650 visitors per month arrive at the Monument by public transit. According to a 1992-1993 visitor survey, transit bus trips accounted for less than two percent of all modes used to access the Monument.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

Since parking and the roadway network within the Monument rarely operate at capacity, and visitation is seasonal and has been fairly constant in the last couple of years, there do not appear to be any short-term ATS needs. Existing local transit service provides a good connection between downtown San Diego and the Monument. Visitors also have the option of transferring from the local trolley system to a bus to access the site. At the very least, the Monument should continue to promote transit access in order to reduce automobile trips. However, if visitation increases in the future to a point where vehicle access via Cabrillo Road to the Tidepool area becomes a traffic, environmental, or resource protection concern, there may be potential for some form of van shuttle system. Such an ATS system could bring visitors from the Visitor Center parking lot to the Tidepool area and would function as an internal circulation system. Service would at first be demand-responsive and expand to regular scheduled service as demand warrants.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

An internal ATS has the potential to reduce the need to expand both the roadway or parking facilities within the Monument. An ATS may be able to reduce the negative visual and environmental impacts of noise, emissions, and traffic congestion associated with automobiles. In an environmentally sensitive site such as the Tidepool area, transit vehicles with alternative forms of fuel (such as CNG and electric power) can reduce the negative impact of pollution on the natural habitat. Some form of interpretive program (either through a ranger or recorded audio message) can be used on-board the vehicles as part of the overall visitor experience.

■ 5.0 Documents Reviewed

Cabrillo National Monument. *General Management Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement*. Cabrillo National Monument, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, February 1996.

Parsons Brinckerhoff. *Cabrillo National Monument, Traffic Analysis*. Submitted to the National Park Service, August 1998.

Cabrillo National Monument. *Visitor Survey, 1992-1993*. Notes, results, and survey instrument.

■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Terry DiMattio, Superintendent, Cabrillo National Monument